

MAXIMS OF THE SAGES

A TRANSLATION OF KEY VERSES WITH
COMMENTARY

增廣賢文精簡英文版

BRIAN CHUNG

作者：鍾佰晟

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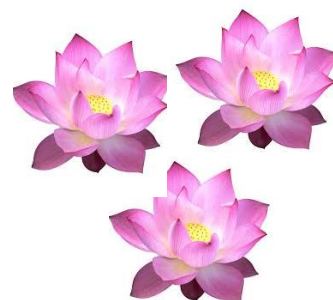


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Brian Chung

*"Anywhere a Buddha goes—whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet — people will be
converted and brought towards the Way.
All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious.
The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be luminous.
Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm.
Plagues, intrigues and calamities will not occur.
Society will be prosperous and peaceful.
Soldiers and arms will be of no use.
Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished.
All will feel compelled to refine themselves with etiquette and deference.
Society will be free from thieves and bandits.
There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice.
The powerful will not exploit the weak,
And everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."*

-Infinite Life Sutra

As the Self-nature alone is empty and ethereal, it transcends all forms of evil.

As the Self-nature is wondrously perfect, it holds all splendor and beauty.

As the Self-nature is unobstructed, it gives rise to the six divine powers.

As the Self-nature does not abide anywhere, it can neither be ceased nor obliterated.

As the Self-nature is not attached to action, it can neither be limited nor exhausted.

As the Self-nature has no exterior, it is boundless like the wind.

As the Self-nature has no interior, it manifests as everything, just like how a gleaming mirror can reflect anything.

As the Self-nature is luminously bright, it shines forth like the radiant sun.

And as the Self-nature is impartial, it pervades everywhere like incense.

-The Discourse on Giving Rise to Faith in the Infinite Life Sutra

(By Qing Dynasty Upasaka Peng Ji Qing 彭際清)

DEDICATION OF MERIT

**May the merits and virtues accrued from this work
repay the kindness of my Mother, Father, Elders and Ancestors
and relieve them from their sufferings.**



**May my Mother, Father, Elders and Ancestors
bring forth the heart
of understanding and compassion and,
at the end of this life,
be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.**



FOREWORD

The 增廣賢文 (Maxims of the Sages) is a collection of adages spoken by the Ancient Sages of China. The first known edition of this book originated from the Ming dynasty. Afterwards, it was continually improved by later scholars, who augmented it with wise sayings from other important scriptures.

The wise and clever maxims found in this book are especially relevant in our current age of stress and turmoil. Furthermore, these maxims are in full accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. As a matter of fact, the Sagely wisdom of Confucius, Mencius and the other Ancient Sages are considered to be the foundational knowledge that all Buddhists should study. The Venerable Master Chin Kung has stated that the great Mahayana sutras are the august fruits of the Dharma, but the roots are the precepts and the wisdom of the Ancient Sages.

Moreover, in August 2013, the Venerable Master Chin Kung commissioned an excellent new edition of this book— using a long forgotten edition published during the early years of the Republic of China as the manuscript.

Thus, this book is a rare gem that is hard to come by in our age. Therefore, we should diligently study the selected maxims found herein. The wisdom acquired will without doubt calm our hearts and ease our minds.

This edition contains a selection of 168 key maxims from the Chinese text, along with some commentary.

SELECTED MAXIMS

1.) By being close to the sea, we naturally become experts of marine life. Likewise, by living near to mountains, we can eventually discern between all the different sounds of diverse species of birds.

Commentary:

This verse stresses the importance of long term single-minded cultivation. If we only dabble superficially in a variety of subjects, we will master nothing and have nothing to show for our efforts—just like how a man who merely visits the seaside for a day will have scant knowledge of marine life.

The Ven. Master Chin Kung often stresses that a student who adheres to the modern academic curriculum will become a jack of all trades but master of none. This is because too many subjects are being studied concurrently. Therefore, he exhorts us to read one sacred text at least a thousand times in order to truly understand the limitless hidden meanings. The key to success is to cultivate one Dharma-door unceasingly. For example, the impressively dense branches of a grand oak tree are still supported by one single strong tree trunk. Likewise, constant cultivation and immersion in a particular subject or environment is needed to master any subject matter.

The Buddha-nature possessed by each of us is self sufficient and capable of generating infinite wisdom and knowledge. Thus, Sages single-mindedly cultivate one Dharma-door until the unlimited wisdom of the Buddha-nature is recovered, at which point there is nothing they do not know.

2.) When our luck turns sour, even gold can change into copper. However, when fortune smiles upon us, even copper can turn into gold.

Commentary:

This is a particularly important verse. Nowadays, we often rely on methods, skills or assets to help us realize our dreams. If we have degrees, capital or connections, we expect that these assets will protect us or give us advantages that cannot be easily taken away. If we don't have them, we plan various ways to achieve advantages. For instance, the unemployed often consider further education to be the solution that will help them attract to recruiters.

However, the truth is that these external things are useless in the grand scheme of things. The only thing that matters is our karmic situation. If we have too many sins, then even ironclad status, wealth and intelligence will disappear in an instant. However, if we have accumulated many merits, our miseries will be automatically turned into bliss within a blink of an eye.

For instance, according to a true account recorded in an edition of the Treatise on Response and Retribution:

Fang Shih-k'o, a native of Hsing-an, had been very sickly from a child. Afterwards he began to enquire into the mysteries of Taoism, with a view of procuring the secret of immortality. Arrived one day at the Cloud-capped Mountain, he met a person of strange appearance, who said, "With such a face as yours, how can you expect to get the blessings that you seek? It is impossible—unless you first plant a root of goodness." Then Shih-k'o went home; and although he was a poor man he found means to print off an edition of the Book of Recompenses and distribute copies among his friends. By the time he had printed ten pages, his sickness was half-cured; when the work was completed, he found himself entirely recovered; and from that time forward he became [p. 115](#) robust in body, and quite different from what he had been before in appearance.

In this case, the merits derived from printing sutras turned Fang Shih-K'o—a poor, sickly and unattractive person—into a strong and handsome person. All external things such as this world, our bodies and our intelligence are composed of the four elements and five skandahs. These factors change in accordance with our karma, which in turn is changed by our good deeds and virtue. Thus, if we diligently accumulate good deeds and support worthy causes—such as printing sutras, creating Buddha images or liberating life—our dreams will certainly come true. As the maxim states: *"Even copper can turn into gold."*

In the Buddha's Infinite Life Sutra, it is stated that reciting **Namo Amitabha** is the greatest good. According to the Contemplation Sutra, just one recitation of this Buddha's name can eradicate eight billion eons worth of heavy karmic offenses. Even the 5 grave offenses that warrant rebirth in the Relentless Hell can be wiped away by reciting Namō Amitabha. Moreover, according to Amita Buddha's 48 Vows,

Amitabha Vows 25-27: The Vows of Good Karma and Virtue

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are

inspired by my name to sincerely cultivate the Bodhisattva Way shall be respected by both men and devas. Moreover, sentient beings who merely hear my name will be reborn as virtuous aristocrats possessing wealth, knowledge and auctoritas. Their bodies will be healthy and complete. Lastly, they will enjoy cultivating the highest Dharma. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Thus, if merely hearing Amita Buddha's name can yield such great rewards, how much more could be achieved if we sincerely recite it on our own accord?

3.) Wealth and power are like chaff, but honor and virtue are worth thousands of gold taels.

Commentary:

Like the previous maxim, this verse also stresses the importance of good karma. Wealth, power and status are merely the fruits of doing good. Thus, they come easily when good deeds are done. However, if a man is immoral, then even if he has a great fortune and extensive clout—he still owns nothing but chaff. This is because he is merely enjoying his past merits. Eventually, his evil deeds and lack of virtue will create an avalanche of sins that will wipe away all his temporal blessings.

4.) Only lengthily journeys can gauge a horse's strength and endurance. Likewise, only long term undertakings can prove a man's devotion.

Commentary:

According to the Jade Record,

"Good deeds done half-heartedly and rarely will yield trivial rewards. Good deeds done sincerely and often will yield great rewards. Trivial rewards come quickly. However, profound bliss and unimaginable rewards come only after a while."

"In this world, there are many who do good. Nevertheless, there are hardly any people who steadfastly do good. A man who insincerely does a few good deeds—and immediately stops when his own sloth and faithlessness rise to test him—will never reap the true and profound benefits of virtue. Such a man has had his judgment compromised by his lack of even a hairs-breadth worth of patience."

Thus, there are many people in this world who are willing to do good. unfortunately, most are unwilling to do more than a few half-hearted deeds on the rare occasion.

If we wish to truly change our karma, we must diligently do good deeds within our reasonable mental and physical capacity. The actual impact of our goodness is not the decisive factor. What matters is that we do what we can bear to do.

5.) If two people wholeheartedly cooperate, they can earn enough to purchase gold bricks. However, if they are selfish and suspicious, they will not be able to purchase even a needle.

6.) Those who are tolerant, patient and forgiving are not fools. However, those who are vindictive and selfish are without doubt fools.

7.) Sometimes, water can be thicker than blood and blood lighter than water.

8.) Everything— be it people, delicacies or vintages— is better back home.

Commentary

Echoing playwright Royall Tyler's famous words: *"Why should our thoughts to distant countries roam, when each refinement lies at home?"* This maxim enlightens us to the fact that everything is better back home. It doesn't matter if it is actually better, it naturally feels so. The grass may seem greener on the other side, but once the other side has been seen, it will not seem so anymore.

Thus, we should check our ambition and stay put. Where we are born is the place that suits us the most. If it does not, then nowhere else on Earth can give us happiness. Even if we immigrate, we will never be at ease and must battle discrimination, cultural barriers and the like. The only way to future prosperity is the accumulation of merits. With merits, even a desolate war zone can become a blissful paradise.

9.) Just like how the flowers and orioles fear the passing of Spring, we should carefully avoid squandering our youth on idle pursuits.

Commentary:

Nowadays, teenagers and young people often spend their youth having fun or doing things that may appear to be useful (e.g. college education etc.) but are actually not.

According to Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way,

If you are old and established, the fortune you accumulate will be experienced by your descendants—your own rewards are in heaven. If you are young and unmarried, you will personally experience bliss in this very life from the good deeds you do.

From these words, it is clear that if we start to amass merits from childhood or our early teenage years, we will create for ourselves an unimaginably blissful life of happiness. If we can continue without cease, a splendid heavenly rebirth will also follow. This is because early goodness melts away pending bad karma, thereby allowing current and past merits to manifest fully without being weighed down by negative karma.

However, if we only start to cultivate when we are well into adulthood, the personal benefits we experience will be less dramatic. Nevertheless, our descendents will enjoy great fortune. The bulk of the good karma can only be enjoyed after death.

Thus, we should ensure that our children start cultivating merits and virtue as young as possible. From the moment of conception, we should do no evil and do all that is good (e.g. recite sutras). If the child can be immersed in such an atmosphere of merit and purity while in the womb, he or she will surely attain Buddhahood before long.

Moreover, the Infinite Life Sutra also stresses the importance of cultivating merits when one is still young, capable and strong.

10.) Those who do not show hospitality at home will be snubbed when they journey outside.

12.) When a rich man raves, the world still listens attentively. When a poor man speaks reason, people still ignore him.

13.) While urban areas offer superior financial opportunities, rural and quiet places can allow you to ease your mind and recuperate.

14.) Events may occur like a raging storm, but they always end up as tiny dust.

Commentary:

This maxim reminds us of impermanence. Epic battles, violent power struggles, glorious feats and august coronations may have been as noticeable as a storm during their time—but today, they are nothing but bygone memories existing in dusty pages of history books.

Thus, instead of expending time, attention and effort on the impermanent, we should do good deeds and diligently cultivate virtue.

15.) The men of times past cannot see the moonlight today. Nonetheless, the same moon had once shone upon them.

16.) Be very wary of hypocrites who harbor malice in their hearts while prating kindness or honesty.

17.) While there are straight trees, there are few men without a crooked heart.

18.) Blame the lack of leaves rather than accuse the sun of bias.

Commentary

If a tree cannot harness sunlight, the problem lies with its own inadequate number of leaves rather than the way the sun shines. Likewise, we should not blame God, the Jade Emperor or the like for our misfortunes or unrealized ambitions. Our grievances are due to our insufficient stocks of merit, which are too few to bring about what we wish for. We should instead diligently do more good in order to realize our goals.

19.) Everything is due to karma, not even one minute aspect is caused by others or by luck.

20.) Each year begins at Spring. Each day starts between the 3rd and 5th hour of the morning. The pillar that upholds the family is harmony, and success in life rests on diligent cultivation of merits.

Commentary:

Time management is very important in life. Thus, both sleeping late and staying up late are taxing and inefficient habits. We should rise from bed by 4 or 5 A.M. in order to make use of the hours available. According to Ven. Master Hsuan Hua, while the average person may live for eight decades, only a small portion of that time could be devoted towards constructive endeavors. For example, one cannot do much in the first two decades and one is often too old and sick during the later decades to do anything. This leaves the middle three or four decades. However, half of that time is spent on sleeping, eating and other mundane routines. Furthermore, even more time is spent on work and other neutral activities. Thus, how much time do we really have to accumulate merits?

If we add bad time management or laziness into the mix, there would be barely any time left. Human rebirth is rare and short. If we fail to accumulate stocks of merit during our time here, our lives would be wasted.

Furthermore, family harmony is of paramount importance. Harmonious families are the building blocks of stable societies. Very little could be done if families are divided. Thus, family members must exercise cooperation and forbearance and refrain from causing discord or harboring grudges against each other.

21.) Judge your own conduct using the same strictness you judge others with. Tolerate others using the same lenient standards you judge yourself with.

22.) Guard your tongue as firmly as you would cork a bottle. Guard against evil or wandering thoughts like you would a citadel.

23.) It is better to be bullied than to be a bully.

Commentary:

Bullying creates evil karma that has serious consequences. According to the Infinite Life Sutra:

"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we should be cautious. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."

Therefore, we must exercise forbearance if we are bullied or abused. Such virtue will eradicate countless past demerits and augment our stocks of merit. However, those who bully only invite future strife and karmic retributions.

24.) Always think thoroughly before making choices and starting new undertakings. More importantly, never deceive or betray your own conscience.

25.) Those who enjoy discussing discord, wrongdoing and scandals are themselves low and scandalous.

Commentary:

According to the Buddha, how we act defines what we are. For instance, a man once asked a Sage what he thought of him. The Sage replied that he saw him as a Buddha. The man decided to insult the Sage by saying that he saw him as feces.

When the man got home, he gleefully recounted his outrageous display of arrogance to his wife. She was not amused and pointed out that Buddhas see all other people as Buddhas, and he who sees others as feces are feces themselves.

Thus, that is why nobility comes from humility and lowliness from pride/arrogance. The prideful hold everyone else in contempt, thereby filling their hearts with contempt. As the outside is simply a manifestation of the inside, their inner contempt will manifest as ugliness and lowliness. The humble revere everyone else. Thus, the reverence that fills their heart becomes karma which gives them nobility and dignified appearances.

26.) A friendly relative living far away is not as helpful as a neighbor who lives nearby.

27.) When a man has plenty of largesse to spread, many will call him brother. However, only in times of peril can he tell if he has any true friends.

28.) Human relationships are as fragile as paper. Worldly affairs and events often unfold like rounds of chess, with each new move changing the status quo.

Commentary:

Do not rely on favors or friendship. As the world is full of intrigue and variable change, nothing temporal is reliable. Therefore, we should rely on our merits and good deeds. For instance, according to the Pettavathu, a Earth deva once spoke the following verse after being reborn as such:

'What he gives becomes not just that. Just give the gift. Giving he traverses both (worlds); by it he goes to both , Be not slothful.'

He had gifted a wooden axle to a merchant whose cart axle was broken. On account of this merit, he was soon reborn as a Earth deva after making the gift. By "traverses both (worlds)", he means that **merits can both protect you in this life and the next.**

29.) There are thousand year old trees in the mountains. However, centenarians on the street are a rare sight.

30.) Do not bear burdens that will cause you mental distress or physical strain.

31.) By being constantly vigilant against committing offensive acts, no one will hold grudges against you.

32.) Sages are national treasures ; disciples of Confucian teachings are like rare delicacies, the highlight of any banquet.

33.) The best way to convince a man to give up alcohol is to simply have him observe drunks while sober.

34.) When you are in need of help, seek assistance from men of virtue and upright thought. When seeking to help others, help those who are in urgent need.

Commentary:

According to Ven. Master Chin Kung, a wise man saves the distressed and desperate but not those who are merely poor. Instead, they teach the poor the Dharma so they can make merits for themselves. This is because those who have no merits have not the ability to retain wealth even if gold was delivered to them on a silver platter.

35.) By overstaying one's welcome, one becomes an irritation. Likewise, constant interaction—even between beloved kinsmen—will cause weariness.

36.) Those who still speak measured words while drinking wine are true gentlemen. Those whose financial records are honest and in order are honorable men.

Commentary:

This verse perfectly mirrors the conduct of Roman statesman Cato the Younger. Cato had a reputation of keeping perfect accounts in an era riddled with corruption. Furthermore, his austerity and self restraint was legendary. Thus, an important sign of virtue is honesty in financial dealings (i.e. to counter greed) and restraint against temptation.

37.) If a veteran monk remains as enthusiastic about Bodhi as when he first joined the Sangha, he will become a Buddha very soon.

38.) It would be better to single- mindedly cultivate a sutra instead of amassing a fortune.

39.) If parents fail to furnish their sons and daughters with Sagely wisdom , then they might as well breed donkeys and pigs.

40.) If a family has sutras and sagely books, they must teach it to their children. If they do not, their descendants will be deluded and unwise.

41.) The gain derived from conversing with a Sage for one night is superior to studying sutras for ten years.

Commentary:

The wisdom derived from conversing with a Sage or Buddha is superior to that of studying a sutra. This is because whatever a Sage or Buddha says to an individual represents a Dharma-door tailored completely to his habits, karmic situation and inclinations. On the other hand, the sutras are more general and geared towards a wider audience. Even though sincere cultivation of the sutras will yield Bodhi, it is easier to achieve it if you could meet a Buddha.

If you wish to meet the Buddha Maitreya (the next Buddha) and study under him, you must diligently amass merits. According to the Buddha Pronounces the Sūtra of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Attainment of Buddhahood, the following good deeds will yield this opportunity:

“Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit, whether by reading and reciting the Tripiṭaka—the Sūtras, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma—by praising their tenets and expounding them to others, or by, without jealousy, teaching and enabling others to accept and uphold [the Dharma]. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by giving others food and clothing, observing the precepts, and developing wisdom. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by offering Buddhas music, canopies, flowers, incense, and bright lamps. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by offering food regularly to Saṅghas, erecting monks' living quarters, providing monks with the four necessities, or observing the eight precepts regularly for purification and for cultivation of loving-kindness. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by invoking profound compassion for sentient beings in suffering and by personally bearing their suffering to give them happiness. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by observing their precepts, enduring adversities, and developing the pure mind of loving-kindness. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by building temples or offering food to the monks who came from everywhere to attend Dharma assemblies. Among you, there are those who have

been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by observing their precepts, hearing much [of the Dharma], practicing meditation, and developing affliction-free wisdom. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by erecting pagodas, making offerings to holy relics, or thinking of the dharma body of Buddhas. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by rescuing and liberating people in hardship, poverty, solitude, or bondage to others, people about to be tortured or executed by the law, or people in tremendous suffering because of their tribulation of the eight difficulties. Among you, there are those who have been reborn in the place where I am, because they have acquired merit by skillfully bringing to union and harmony people in tremendous suffering because of love, separation, faction, or dispute.'

However, the coming of the Buddha Maitreya is still millions of years from now. Thus, it would be better if dedicate our stocks of merit to rebirth in Amita Buddha's Pureland. If we are mindful of Amita Buddha during our last moment, Amita Buddha will personally appear to welcome us into Pureland. As soon as his light shines upon us, we instantly become Bodhisattvas. Thereafter, we will attain Unsurpassed Bodhi under the tutelage of Amita Buddha in Pureland.

42.) If a man does not (within his power) cultivate virtue or study the wisdom of the Sages, then he is no better than an ox or horse clad in human attire.

Commentary:

Delusion is the unwholesome mental state that defines the realm of animals. Thus, if a person does not try to plant roots of wisdom in the Buddhadharma, he is likely to be reborn as an animal in the future.

43.) There are countless people living within the Four Seas and Nine Provinces, yet few of them are Sages.

Commentary:

The "Four Seas and Nine Provinces" refer to the boundaries of Ancient China—the known world. This maxim echoes the famous line of the Infinite Life Sutra, "*Few become Sages while many drown in their own delusions.*" Thus, this maxim reminds

us of the importance of cultivating the Dharma. If we can cultivate good in a world as evil as ours, our merits will be incomparable.

44.) The reason one painstakingly distills excellent liquor is to provide hospitality. Likewise, spending a fortune to collect or publish Sagely scriptures is money well spent.

Commentary:

This maxim highlights the importance of printing sutras. According to Venerable Master Chin Kung, a man who offers just one bowl of rice to a Paccekabuddha will be wealthy for 9 billion eons. However, if a man cultivates the Infinite Life Sutra and introduces it to others, his merits will be one billion times greater than making offerings to countless Arhats and Paccekabuddhas living in one galaxy. Thus, all of us must print, preserve or promote sutras whenever we have the chance.

45.) It is better to give a man the mind seal of the Buddha than to build a seven tiered pagoda.

Commentary:

The meaning of this maxim is that there is no deed higher than introducing a man to the name of Amita Buddha. This is because the only way to achieve Unsurpassed Bodhi is by seeking rebirth in Pureland. In fact, even great Bodhisattvas seek rebirth in Pureland. Thus, Amita Buddha is the sum of all Dharmas.

46.) If the city gate catches fire, everyone will rush to the surrounding ponds and empty it of water. Thus, by saving the gate, countless fish will die.

Commentary:

This maxim addresses moral dissonance and misguided priorities. People and statesman often advocate various policies that backfire. For instance, by spending most of the nation's resources on warfare, the economy and people will suffer. Even if the wars seem superficially justifiable, they are actually not. For instance, if the city gate catches fire, it is the fault of the officials for commissioning one out of wood instead of one made from metal. Draining the surrounding bodies of water to save it

(killing the fish in the process) simply creates more bad karma. It would be better to let the gate burn down so you could build a new one.

Likewise, wars and conflict are caused by the karma of eating meat and butchering animals. According to the eminent Upasaka An Shi:

As animals have no recourse against the never-ending slaughter, they must silently swallow their grievances. This leads to a dismal atmosphere of mounting evil karma. Eventually, as the evil karma of killing accumulates to the limit, demon kings will descend into the human realm as a response.

The Zen Master Ci Shou once said: "As a result of the sin of animal slaughter, violence and wars will break out. Those who have taken life will in turn lose their lives. Those who have maliciously refused to repay their debts will lose their homes in the chaos. Furthermore, those who have destroyed burrows and nests will have their family members scattered. Each sin will result in the appropriate retribution. Hence, do not fail to heed the Buddha's words."

Thus, by making vegetarianism law and keeping treasury money for the development of the country, everyone will have peace and prosperity,

47.) By not flaunting and by keeping a low profile, one can remain free from unwanted trouble.

48.) If you wish to achieve wealth and aristocratic status, you must diligently cultivate merits.

49.) Great undertakings are fragile, they require many years to accomplish but only a moment to destroy.

Commentary:

This maxim again reminds us of impermanence. Great fortunes, vast empires and lofty status often take generations to acquire and create. However, they can all be lost in one moment. Thus, it is better to use our time and energy to diligently accumulate merits instead of chasing phantoms or building an impermanent house of cards.

50.) It is difficult to turn people towards virtue, but very easy to entice them into committing evil.

51.) Sterile waters are devoid of marine life. Likewise, pedantry and scrupulosity robs one of wisdom.

52.) Unmarried women should obey their fathers ; married women should obey their husbands. Only a fool turns his back on his wife and sagely women revere their husbands.

53.) There will always be scandals and bad news. However, if you ignore them, they cease to exist.

Commentary:

According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, the internet and television are the chief karmic obstacle that troubles people today. Most of the things found in the media are negative and cause fear, anxiety, greed or turbid emotions. Moreover, the internet, social media and so forth often causes idleness and induce people to waste time.

Thus, true cultivators of the Dharma ignore the constant stream of gossip, opinions, temptations, sensationalism, arguments and temporal matters that flow through the media. Instead, they concentrate all attention towards the single-minded recitation of Amitabha. After all, those who are pure at heart can hear no evil and suffer no pain.

54.) It is much better to be virtuous and deprived than to be prosperous and immoral.

55.) It is much better to be prepared for something than to assume that it will never happen.

Commentary:

This maxim again reminds us on the importance of having a stock of merit. Only with merits will we have friends, resources and options when confronted by dilemmas, for fortune favors those with virtue and merit. Even if untimely death strikes, a stock of merit (bolstered by numerous good deeds) will award a good and blissful rebirth.

56.) You will always get what you deserve. However, no amount of effort can yield what you don't.

Commentary:

As stated before, most people seek only the external. For instance, they try very hard to realize their goals by hard work, obtaining expensive degrees, building networks, scheming or misconduct. However the truth is that how high they can climb has already been determined by their karma. That is why we often see the efforts of a few rewarded and the hard work and intelligence of many go unrewarded. The few that are rewarded have merit and even if they did not work at all, blessings and power would still find its way to them. Thus, the only wise thing to do is to accumulate good deeds. Only merits can yield improvement and change the karmic situation.

57.) When making friends, seek those whose talents and wisdom are superior to your own. Otherwise, you would be wasting your time.

Commentary:

According to the Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way, we should distance ourselves from evil people and associate with the virtuous. By doing so, we will avoid being caught in the misfortunes that shadow the evil. Moreover, we will be able to share the surplus merits that naturally emanate from the virtuous and enjoy the protection of the virtuous spirits that shadow them.

58.) When one is sharpening a knife, one fears not sharpening it enough. However, an excessively sharp knife can easily injure one's own fingers.

59.) Those who are content are always happy. Unlike the greedy, those who have little desire will never be humiliated. The reserved and restrained cannot be shamed or disgraced.

60.) When those with stocks of merit encounter misfortune, they sustain only monetary loss. However, when those without merits meet misfortune, they often sustain injury or lose their lives.

Commentary:

Stocks of merit are like invisible armor that deflects the blows of evil karma and cushions against misfortunes.

For instance, a man who has accumulated many merits is like a great body of water. Even if buckets of manure were to be dumped in, it will quickly wash away. However, a man who has not done good is like a small pond, vulnerable to even a small amount of negative karmic retribution.

61.) Even a minute error can lead to massive losses.

62.) Those who wish to climb a mountain must start at the base. Likewise, those who wish to travel to distant lands must first walk familiar roads.

Commentary:

All the Dharma the Buddha has spoken over the course of his life can be summed up in three words: Sila, Samadhi and Prajna. No matter which Dharma-door you choose to cultivate, you will have to start by cultivating virtue and the precepts. Virtue is the soil that equanimity and samadhi grows from.

63.) Always be cautious. However, do not become overly cautious.

64.) Rather than asking others to do something, do it yourself. Instead of appealing for help, fight alone.

Commentary:

Nowadays, human relationships are complicated. Large organizations are even more so. Thus, it is better to rely on yourself. However, as humans are dependent and often cannot stand alone, the only course of action is to achieve Buddhahood.

The true message of the Buddha is to achieve liberation yourself and then liberate others. For instance, the first task the Ven. Master Hai Xian undertook when he was ordained was to recite Amitabha until single-mindedness was attained. Moreover, the Buddha himself sought enlightenment first and on his own before he formed the Sangha and propagated the Dharma. The only way forward is to become self sufficient, and the only way to become self sufficient is to rediscover our self sufficient Buddha-nature.

Furthermore, according to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, it is very difficult to clear the head of defiling and wandering thoughts. Thus, the Dharma-door of Amitabha Pureland is unique among all of the 84,000 Dharma-doors, for it does not require the practitioner to cultivate Zen or master esoteric forms of meditation. The Pureland door is simple to practice and straightforward: The mind concentrates on Amitabha, the mouth recites Amitabha and the body prostrates to Amitabha.

With diligence, the practitioner will eventually sees only Amitabha and hears only Amitabha. This state represents success in cultivation and assured rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss (Pureland). This is because Amitabha is our Buddha-nature and the Buddha-nature is Amitabha.

65.) It is not outrageous to be envious of the wealthy, but never envy a man for having enough to eat. Likewise, you may despise a living man, but you must let go of all grudges against the dead.

Commentary:

It is inevitable that common people will be influenced by their defilements of greed, hatred and delusion. Thus, it is not wrong per se to feel such emotions or be pushed by them as long as conduct remains subject to restraint and reason. According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, if one's behavior is not outrageous and proper restraint is exercised, there is no karmic offense.

Thus, while most would feel envious of the rich, as long as their envy remains only in the heart and does not spawn spiteful words in public or criminal actions, and as long as the resentment is not so outrageous as to extend even to those of modest means, then there is no offense.

66.) Those who are content and self sufficient are unburdened. On the other hand, the rich are crushed by anxieties.

67.) Some people not only feel no gratitude, but also mistake kindness shown for enmity.

68.) Always do things through proper channels. Do not use back doors, bribery or improper connections.

69.) Do not idle away days of mild weather only to start undertakings when the storm arrives.

Commentary:

This maxim stresses the importance of accumulating merits regularly. Don't wait until death or disease comes knocking. Moreover, opportunities to accumulate merit may not always be available, or our health may fail us. Thus, if we are young, healthy and have resources, we should be especially diligent in amassing good deeds.

70.) Water that has mixed into the sea cannot be recovered. Likewise, do not complain about things that have already happened.

71.) Most arguments and troubles are caused by failing to guard one's tongue. Likewise, anxieties are caused by greed and ambition.

72.) By controlling one's rage, one can avoid lengthily troubles later on.

73.) Human life is as short as blossoms during springtime.

74.) Your sons and grandsons have their own merits. Thus, don't slave away for them.

75.) While the human lifespan does not even reach one century, it is packed with a thousand years worth of anxieties.

76.) If you have good wine today, enjoy it. Worry about tomorrow's problems tomorrow.

77.) Calm waters do not ripple. Likewise, men with serene hearts are neither agitated nor argumentative.

78.) If the one horse refuses to move, all the other horses will be troubled.

79.) When one is favored, adored and successful, it is time to retire. Don't wait until things turn sour.

Commentary:

The gravest mistake one makes is to go all in when at the height of fortune. Wise men are frugal with their stocks of merit. They retain their merits for future security and not for fleeting vainglory. In fact, those who refrain from ambition and hubris despite having the merits to attain greater glory can have their stocks of merit multiplied. Thus, once we have enough to live comfortably, we should retire. Lastly, remember the old Chinese adage: Extreme bliss leads to tears of misery.

80.) Do not leave places with plenty of fish ; do not cling to shallow waters.

Commentary:

The meaning of this maxim is that one should not cling to superficial things while ignoring the Buddhadharma or other merit fields. For instance, if a rich man despises the poor but revels in luxury, he is foolishly disregarding this maxim. If he gave to the poor and needy, his stock of merit would increase exponentially. By clinging only to luxury, he will become poor in either this life or the next.

81.) Hold your tongue and extinguish your anger. If you show mercy and forgiveness, others will respect you and become compliant.

Commentary:

This verse reminds us of the importance of forbearance. By holding our tongue and suppressing our anger, we will avoid countless troubles later on. Furthermore, we should not be too harsh and strict. By being merciful, we will inspire offenders to change or become more restrained. Sages teach by inspiring feelings of shame towards bad conduct, not by brute force.

Furthermore, the laws of karma are always fair. Hence, by not acting out, we protect our merits. Those who hurt us will fall to deserved fate in the evil realms. But if you take revenge, you will fall with them.

82.) Humans are like birds living in a forest. When death comes, all will fly away in different directions.

Commentary:

According to the Infinite Life Sutra:

"Moreover, amidst temporal desires and attachments one is born alone and dies alone. The departed transmigrate to either a painful or to a pleasant state of existence. Each receives individual karmic retributions that no one else can bear in their place. Once a person has been reborn in a different realm due to his own karma, he can no longer meet or remember anyone he once knew. Since everyone's path of rebirth is uniquely tailored to their own habits and deeds, it is impossible to tell the time of their reunion."

Thus, we should focus on amassing merits instead of trying to retain friends, family or the like. Everything here is impermanent and will be short lived.

83.) People are afraid of the wicked and tyrannical. However, Heaven is not afraid of evildoers. People abuse the kind and virtuous. Conversely, Heaven never bullies the kind.

84.) Rewards always shadow the virtuous while punishments never fail to pursue the wicked. It is only a matter of time.

Commentary:

According to the Infinite Life Sutra,

"Good and evil both have distinct consequences that always unfold. Once they do, those who have for so long done as they please will be filled with unspeakable fear as their souls descend into the evil realms. Do not doubt what I have said."

"Between Heaven and Earth, there is naturally justice. Even though consequences may

not be immediate, rewards inescapably shadow the virtuous while retributions naturally pursue the wicked."

Hence, we should never do evil and strive to do all good. No one gets away with anything. Rewards and retributions will arrive in due course.

85.) As even the yellow river will one day turn clear, why wouldn't your time come?

Commentary:

If you have accumulated merits, you do not need to worry no matter how dire the situation has become. With merits and good deeds, nothing is impossible. Just wait and fortune will turn your way.

86.) When managing the affairs of others, be as careful as you would when crossing an unreliable wooden bridge.

Commentary:

Many people are dishonest or less devoted and careful when they are managing other people's affairs and money. However, Sages are even more careful when managing the affairs of others than when they are managing their own. The laws of karma ensure that all malfeasance and negligence will be compensated doubly or more by the offender in this life or the next.

87.) When enjoying favor, be mindful that disgrace and ruin can be just around the corner. When in a safe place, be cautious of potential danger.

88.) Mind your own business. Don't prattle about or comment on everything you see, and if others ask—just say you don't know. If you have finished your work, go home.

89.) Do all good and refrain from all evil.

Commentary:

This maxim could be found in many Sagely texts such as the Treatise on Response and Retribution and the Lord Superior Wen Chang's Tract of the Quiet Way. Furthermore, this maxim is often found in Buddhist sutras as well. In fact, the great Master Yin Guang has stated that Buddhism is simply: "Do all good, refrain from all evil and purify the mind." Thus, we should all keep this adage in mind at all times.

90.) When dragons swim in shallow waters, even little prawns can jeer at them. Likewise, when tigers are forced out into the open, even dogs can harass them.

91.) If you have declared homage or made a solemn promise, you must keep it even in the face of bribe and temptation.

92.) After ten years of diligently amassing good deeds, one will certainly rise to fame, fortune and lofty rank.

93.) Indebtedness caused by medical expenses is a common sight. However, how many have managed to live past 70 anyway?

94.) We raise children in order to provide for ourselves in our old age. Likewise, we stock up food to guard against famines.

95.) A honest official is thin and lives modestly.

96.) Forgiveness is the root of victory ; patience and forbearance is the secret key that opens the doors to victory.

97.) kind words and praises are hard to come by, however, scathing words are easy to utter and often spoken.

98.) Promises made in haste or words spoken without consideration cannot be taken back by even a chariot drawn by four steeds.

99.) Drink liquor in the morning and you will be drunk all day. Quarrel with your wife at night and you will be alone all night.

100.) If you harbor virtuous intentions, Heaven will notice and bestow aid upon you.

101.) By planting sesame seeds, you harvest sesame. By planting beanstalks, you harvest beans. You reap what you sow.

102.) Heaven's justice may seem obscure, but neither the most minute error nor the slightest unfairness occurs under its watch. All will get their due.

103.) To be man and wife for just a day is the result of a hundred lifetimes of karmic causes.

104.) Causes and conditions are inconceivable. It takes hundreds of lifetimes of karmic conditions to cause a group of persons to share a ferry ride. Likewise, it takes thousands of lifetimes of karmic causes for two people to share a marriage bed.

103.) Seek neither gold nor jade, only seek to ensure that your descendants will all be Sages.

Commentary:

According to Ven. Master Chin Kung's commentary on Liao Fan's Four Lessons, even after we die, we can still share the merits of our descendants. If our descendants are virtuous and become Buddhas, we will rise to Heavenly bliss.

104.) A man bent on short term gain is oblivious to looming danger.

105.) Critical words cut like a knife through the heart.

106.) The rich think of the upcoming year while the poor think only of the next day.

107.) Life and death are due to karma, and wealth and power comes from Heaven alone.

Commentary:

According to the Treatise on Response and Retribution, various demigods shadow each individual and report his merits and offenses to Heaven on a regular basis. For instance, the Hearth Spirit reports at the end of each lunar month. Good deeds are rewarded by honors, offices, ease, fulfillment in family life, increased lifespan, and wealth. Evil deeds are punished by reduction of lifespan (by either 12 year or 100 day periods) and various misfortunes. The treatise also states that it takes approximately three years (1000 days) for significant rewards or retribution to materialize. Thus, a man who does good deeds daily or diligently for three years can expect significant good fortune to be bestowed at the end of that period. The opposite happens to evildoers.

108.) The superior man commends wealth obtained through virtuous means.

109.) It is a fact that virtue begets rewards while evil attracts retribution. It is not that there is no justice, it is simply because the proper time has yet to come.

110.) If a man does not even have the basic virtues of trust and honesty, he will find it difficult to function in life.

111.) Do not laugh at the old and elderly, for you too will be old soon enough.

112.) If you wish to do something properly, you must first consult three virtuous elders. Furthermore, pedantry will mislead you from the main point.

Commentary:

According to the Ancients Sages: " Failure rears its ugly head to those who ignore the wise words of elders."

Thus, before we wish to do something, we should carefully seek advice from the virtuous and experienced.

113.) When it is time to drink and toast, do so gladly. When it is time to sing, do so joyfully.

114.) By allowing the wind to blow the fire, you can conserve your own energy.

115.) By refraining from making incessant requests or constant appeals for help, your friendships and social relations will not be strained.

116.) By ignoring all that which is not necessary to know, your mind becomes calm and free from anxiety. By insisting to interact or speak with someone that you do not need to know, controversies and incidents will increase.

117.) Fear not the tigers in the woods. Fear the two faced and those who harbor secret malice and ulterior motives.

118.) Amongst the strong there are the even stronger. Likewise, the evil and wicked will naturally meet and be defeated by an even greater evil.

119.) A fortune in gold is inferior to a peaceful life, the true gem.

120.) All professions of this world are base and inferior, only scholars who study the sutras and the works of past Sages are truly noble.

121.) A man who regularly does good deeds will be happy. On the other hand, the evil are tormented by fear and shadowed by retribution.

122.) Even if you are in a rush, other people aren't and they won't make exceptions for you. People's hearts often remain clouded by anxieties even when they are resting.

123.) Even lambs kneel to drink their mothers milk and crows catch food to feed their mothers.

124.) A virtuous and cultivated wife will help her husband avoid disasters and controversies. Filial sons and grandchildren will bring ease to their father's heart.

125.) When someone else does something, it looks very simple and straightforward. Only when you do it yourself will you understand the difficulties.

126.) It is easy to transition from hardship to luxury and ease. However, to transition from luxury to hardship is a task of cruel difficulty.

127.) Pay no attention to the gawking eyes and gossip of others. Moreover, when you see someone who is busy or in trouble, do not rush to help lest you end up in their quagmire.

128.) It is better to light one lamp in the darkness than to light all the lamps in a radiant jeweled tower.

129.) Do not fret over your children's future, their lives will be determined by their own merit and karma.

130.) The gluttonous cannot be satiated even if they sold their house to buy delicacies.

131.) If you do good deeds, you need not worry about your future.

132.) If people are not educated in morality, they will fall astray. Just like a bell will not ring unless tapped.

133.) Closely above each person's heads are demigods who record good and evil deeds. Thus, do not ever betray your conscience.

134.) By extinguishing the fires of passion, the light of the Buddha can finally be seen.

Commentary:

The truth is that the Buddha is always at our side and within our hearts. Moreover, he unceasingly sends blessings our way. However, we never see this because of our own karmic obstacles. Our hearts reject the Buddha's pure wisdom and instead yearn for coarse desires such as pride, lust, hatred and the attendant sufferings they bring.

According to Mencius, the difference between men and animals is slight, but a superior man ardently guards the difference. The difference is our ability to collect merits, cultivate the Dharma and achieve liberation.

Thus, in order to see the Buddha's light (e.g. achieve liberation), we will need to first wipe away our defilements with Dharma cultivation such as Buddha name recitation.

According to In Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra,

Amitabha Vow 42: The Vow of Resplendence

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my land shall be boundlessly expansive and as bright and unblemished as a gleaming mirror. Its light shall pervade warmly across the ten quarters. Any sentient being who can see this light will become irreversible upon the path towards Bodhi. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

What this means is that anyone who can see Amita Buddha's light will become a Bodhisattva of Pure Land. The light is always visible, it is just that we remain ignorant to it. Thus, by single-mindedly reciting Amita Buddha (i.e. Buddha name recitation samadhi), we will eventually be able to see this light and leave the sufferings of the Samsara behind.

135.) By planting the seeds of virtue within the hearts of your sons and daughters, you ensure that they will become diligent farmers of all fields of merit.

136.) Do not bully the young for you do not know what they may become, perhaps you will one day be at their mercy. Moreover, those who wish to bully are dull at heart.

137.) The talented and virtuous are often unappreciated and given no opportunities to accomplish their dreams. However, fools regularly become high officials.

138.) If you can bear a slight, bear it ; if you can yield and retreat, do so. If you can't bear slights or yield to others, even a small matter will escalate into great calamity.

139.) The virtuous deeds of one powerful or influential person can allow the masses to find security and happiness.

140.) Respect the Will of Heaven and you will never fall ; disobey and you will perish.

141.) Propriety and virtue can only arise when the people are secure in their livelihoods. On the other hand, poverty begets banditry and thievery.

Commentary:

This maxim echoes Mencius' wise advice to the King of Liang:

"Mencius replied, 'They are only men of education, who, without a certain livelihood, are able to maintain a fixed heart. As to the people, if they have not a certain livelihood, it follows that they will not have a fixed heart. And if they have not a fixed heart, there is nothing which they will not do, in the way of self-abandonment, of moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license. When they thus have been involved in crime, to follow them up and punish them;-- this is to entrap the people. How can such a thing as entrapping the people be done under the rule of a benevolent man?'"

"Therefore an intelligent ruler will regulate the livelihood of the people, so as to make sure that, for those above them, they shall have sufficient wherewith to serve their parents, and, for those below them, sufficient wherewith to support their wives and children; that in good years they shall always be abundantly satisfied, and that in bad years they shall escape the danger of perishing. After this he may urge them, and they will proceed to what is good, for in this case the people will follow after it with ease."

142.) People die for money ; birds die for food.

143.) Married couples must be as harmonious as an orchestra.

144.) Sumptuous food taxes the body ; lack of restraint and outrageous conduct leads to misfortune.

145.) When wealthy and powerful, be conservative and refrain from abusing your position. When poor, do not scheme or wantonly seek profit at any cost.

146.) By greedily seizing a dou of rice that belongs to another, you will lose half a years worth of grain.

Commentary:

According to the Ven. Master Chin Kung, even if a robber manages to successfully seize money from a victim, he has gained nothing. This is because by robbing, he has simply made a withdrawal from his stock of merit. Nobody can gain what was not meant to be gained. However, robbery creates negative karma and reduces existing merits. Thus, the robber not only gains less than what he would originally have gotten, but also has incurred for himself future karmic retribution as well. If he had simply done nothing, he would have received more money once his past merits materialize. Moreover, if he had done charity work, his stock of merit would have been multiplied. Thus, there is no gain to be derived from evil conduct. Only loss results from karmic offenses.

147.) Some people do nothing but criticize and mock others all their lives, however, a wise man looks only to correct his own faults.

148.) When you see virtue being performed, fear only that you have not yet done such a good deed. When you see evil, run like you would from fire and boiling water.

149.) When someone offends you or infringes on your rights, bear it and do not contend. Eventually, it will pass and your indignation will give way to calmness.

150.) A man cannot be judged by his looks, just like the ocean cannot be measured by a small scale.

151.) Tall grasses may conceal precious herbs, likewise, a modest residence or small hut may harbor a future king, general, chancellor or lord.

152.) If you send a small gift while thousands of miles away, it will still greatly cherished by the recipient.

153.) Even though innumerable things have already been determined by Heaven, people still engage in futile plotting, worrying and scheming.

Commentary

The demigods of Heaven have already determined how future events will play out based on the merit and demerits of individuals. Woe and weal are caused by karma alone and not through any worldly intervention. Thus, plans, plotting and so forth are futile. If something is gained, it was already to be gained. If no gain is deserved, all plans will fail. Thus, craving and restless scheming yields nothing. Only good deeds can result in positive change.

154.) The affairs of the world are as volatile and complicated as a game of Weiqi ; a man's life passes as quickly as a stallion's leap.

155.) Many esteemed and prominent families are brought to ruin by incompetent heirs. However, many great men are raised in modest households.

Commentary

According to the teachings of the Sages of Ancient China, a child will begin to learn and take in information as soon as conception. The Ven. Master Chin Kung has stated that what a child learns and senses between the moment of conception and age 3 will influence him until age 80 ; the cumulative influences experienced by the age of 7 will determine his views for life.

Thus, natal moral education is actually very important. If the parents are celibate, virtuous, filial and observing of etiquette from conception onwards, the child will pick up only positive influences during his first years. Moreover, if the parents cultivate the Dharma (e.g. recite sutras, listen to Dharma talks, make offerings etc.), it is highly likely that the child will attain Sagehood soon.

156.) A man with hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland still eats only a few measures of rice a day. A man with thousand room mansions still occupies only a bed's worth of space at night.

157.) Once mired in lawsuits or court cases, even nine strong oxen cannot pull you out of such a quandary.

158.) Even though the courts and government offices are open to the public, those who have just cause and reason but no money should not bother entering.

159.) Everyone's life will play out in accordance with their karma. Whether they eagerly pursue life or are laid back, the results would still be the same.

commentary:

A person will not experience more happiness than his good karma allows or suffer more hardship than those brought by his own past karmic offenses. Recognition, fame, academic attainments, ease, power, wealth and family relationships are all determined by karma.

Thus, those who eagerly seek success will not get more than they originally deserve or get anything faster. Those who live leisurely will still receive the luxuries and happiness they are entitled to at the predetermined time, one way or the other.

Life exists solely for living beings to work off karma, both good and bad. Everyone will get what they deserve whether they want it or not.

Therefore, the only matter of utmost urgency is the accumulation of merits and the cultivation of virtue. By doing good deeds, past offenses and pending bad karma can be eradicated, and needless to say, blessings will be multiplied.

160.) Do not quarrel or quibble over benefit, you gain nothing by doing so. Everything in life is due to karma.

161.) Private whispers are as loud as thunder to Heaven's ears ; secret crimes are fully visible to the eyes of the gods.

162.) Do not fail to discourage the slightest evil and encourage others to do even the smallest act of good.

163.) To take advantage of another is to invite future disasters ; to forgive and tolerate is to garner merit and fortune.

164.) Everyone has their own mind, and in each of those minds are different opinions, feelings and views.

165.) Wounds can heal, but a heart torn by scathing words is exceedingly difficult to mend.

Commentary:

As mentioned before, according to the Infinite Life Sutra:

"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we should be cautious. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims and suffer their vengeance."

Thus, it is very important to speak kind words and be tactful. Many are liberal with insults and think that doing so is harmless. However, even though wounded pride may not immediately lead to any trouble, it often will in the lives to come.

166.) Some people do not burn incense even when they have spare time, however, in times of crisis, they immediately cling to the Buddha's legs.

Commentary:

Many people idle away their spare time or spend it only on hobbies and entertainment. However, when something happens, they suddenly pray and do good deeds. Afterwards, they fall back to their old habits again.

However, accumulation of merit must be done regularly to achieve maximum effectiveness. Therefore, nobody can afford to procrastinate in regards to doing good deeds. Human life is but a short blur and all the important temporal affairs that dominate life today will mean nothing in the generations to come. Thus, resist distraction.

167.) Only when the country is stable and not corrupt will men of talent be appreciated.

168.) The most egalitarian thing in this world is that all men will one day have grey hair.

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